



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Stephen Elkins, Chief Information Officer *SE*

DATE: December 15, 2016

SUBJECT: General Citizen's Communication via Videoconferencing

The purpose of this memorandum is to present the results and recommendations from the General Citizen's Communications via Videoconferencing pilot during regularly-scheduled open City Council meetings, as defined in Section 2-5-28 of the City Code.

Background

City Council Resolution No. 20160804-054 directed the City Manager to 1) develop a plan for implementation of a pilot program for no longer than three months, 2) report back to Council no later than September 1, 2016 with a plan for the pilot, and 3) report back to Council no later than December 15, 2016 on the results of the pilot and recommendations based on the pilot for technology requirements to implement the program more widely and on a regular basis. In response to the resolution, staff provided a plan to Council on August 29, 2016 and ran the pilot from September 22, 2016 to November 10, 2016.

Pilot results

CTM worked with the City Clerk's Office, PIO, Law, and the District 6 Council member staff to develop a strategy that allowed citizens to videoconference from the District 6 remote office during the General Citizen's Communication portion of City Council meetings. The service was offered for six meetings and a total of four citizens used videoconferencing from District 6 at three Council meetings during the pilot.

After each test, adjustments were made to provide better video and audio quality as well as to enhance the citizen's experience from the district office. Examples of these adjustments were replacing an iPad at the remote office with a dedicated laptop and web camera and adjusting camera positioning and lighting at the district office.

The pilot was successful and underscored the need to explore the feasibility of a scalable solution that could be used in other areas of the City.

Recommendations

CTM staff offers the following options for consideration:

Option 1 - Continue utilizing the District 6 remote office as the sole remote location for General Citizen's Communication. The technology will not change from the pilot and there will be no additional costs associated with this option. Staff has subsequently learned that Spicewood Springs Branch also has the technical capabilities to offer Videoconferencing during Citizen's Communications in District 6.

Option 2 - Continue utilizing the District 6 remote office for General Citizen's Communication **and** concurrently start a new pilot program employing two additional Austin libraries outside of District 6. There are six Austin public libraries with videoconferencing capabilities outside of District 6 that can provide the option for future growth. The following are the six libraries with these capabilities:

Carver Branch	District 1	Manchaca Road Branch	District 5
Ruiz Branch	District 3	Yarborough Branch	District 7
Little Walnut Creek Branch	District 4	Hampton Branch at Oak Hill	District 8

It is important to begin testing the expansion capabilities using two of the libraries because these are newly implemented technologies and library staff must be fully trained to utilize them.

Staff will need to obtain feedback from the Council on whether or not to expand the pilot elsewhere using the public libraries.

No libraries in District 2 or District 10 are listed as potential sites because they do not currently have videoconferencing capabilities. Since City Hall is in District 9, staff did not identify another remote location from District 9.

Next Steps

Please contact me at 512-974-1644, or Chris Stewart, City Hall IT Manager at 512-974-7750, and let us know if you have an interest in participating in the next two remote location expansion pilot for videoconferencing during General Citizen's Communication. Staff does not anticipate there will be a significant increase in budgeted cost for expanding the program and approximates the cost to be less than \$5,000.

Upon successful piloting of the two additional remote sites, staff will determine if it is feasible to designate all of the libraries identified above as remote locations for General Citizen's Communication.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Mark Washington, Assistant City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Brenda Branch, Director of Libraries
Toni Lambert, Assistant Director of Libraries
Jannette Goodall, City Clerk
Chris Stewart, City Hall IT Manager